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RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 5481
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SIPDIS

DEPT PASS USAID TO LAC/RSD, LAC/SAM, G/ENV, PPC/ENV
TREASURY FOR USED IBRD AND IDB AND INTL/MDB
USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE: LIZ MAHEW
INTERIOR FOR DIR INT AFFAIRS: K WASHBURN
INTERIOR FOR FWS: TOM RILEY
INTERIOR FOR NPS: JONATHAN PUTNAM
INTERIOR PASS USGS FOR INTERNATIONAL: J WEAVER
JUSTICE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES: JWEBB
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL: CAM HILL-MACON
USDA FOR ARS/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH: G FLANLEY
NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL: HAROLD STOLBERG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [XR](#) [BR](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH AMERICA ESTH NEWS, NUMBER 102

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1. The following is the one hundred second in a series of newsletters, published by the Brasilia Regional Environmental Hub, covering environment, science and technology, and health news in South America. The information below was gathered from news sources from across the region, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Hub office or our constituent posts. Addressees who would like to receive a user-friendly email version of this newsletter should contact Larissa Stoner at

stonerla@state.gov. The e-mail version also contains a calendar of upcoming ESTH events in the region. NOTE: THE NEWSLETTER IS NOW ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE BRASILIA INTRANET PAGE, BY CLICKING ON THE 'HUB' LINK.

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----- Agriculture -----

13. Paraguay: The Dark Side of the Soy Boom

NOV. 08, 2007 - Paraguay has become the world's fourth largest exporter of soy, behind the United States, Brazil and Argentina. According to the Agriculture Ministry, soy is grown on 2.4 million hectares of land and accounts for 38 percent of the country's agricultural production. The Paraguayan Chamber of Cereals and Oilseeds Exporters (CAPECO) announced that their goal for 2008 is to expand soy cultivation to four million hectares and to double export

revenues from the commodity, which in the first quarter of 2007 amounted to 780 million dollars. But that figure fails to reflect

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the social and environmental consequences of the expansion of soy cultivation, according to the documentary "Soberania violada" (Violation of Sovereignty). The documentary, produced by a Paraguayan team, portrays the drama of campesino (small farmer) communities that experience the spread of soy plantations as a threat to their survival. According to the documentary, intensive soy production has caused a fall in traditional activities like timber extraction, cattle ranching and even production of cotton, which used to be the country's main agricultural export. The area under cotton cultivation has dropped from 509,000 hectares in 1990 to only 160,000 hectares in 2006.

Source - IPS News

14. 'Roundtable on Responsible Soy' Members Meet in Mato Grosso, Brazil

NOV. 12, 2007 - The Principles, Criteria, and Development Group (of the Roundtable on Responsible Soy Production) had its first meeting in Mato Grosso, Brazil, in October 2007. The group is composed of individuals from different countries including Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, China, Holland, India and USA. The two central objectives of the group are: 1) to develop a set of standards of responsible soy value chains, which outline what is meant by responsible production, processing and commerce of soy beans and soy bean products; and 2) to develop an associated verification system. The goals of the work were refined during the meeting, with the participants concluding that while producers will necessarily play a significant role in implementing responsible production, the work of the group needs to address responsibility along the whole soy value chain, to avoid placing an unfeasibly large burden on the producers.

Source - Roundtable on Responsible Soy

Health

15. Colombia: Malaria Winning the Battle in Choc

NOV. 03, 2007 - In the context of the decades-long Colombian civil war, many who flee the fighting in infested areas carry malaria with

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them. According to the non-governmental Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement, between 1999 and 2006, nearly 70,000 people were displaced in the Choco region, whose population is about 800,000. As of September of this year, 19,971 cases of malaria had been reported in Choco, and in 2006 there were 12,441, but the 2007 increase is due to previous "under-reporting". The highest numbers were 31,713 in 1998, and close to 32,000 in 2002, says Palacios. Malaria is endemic across much of Colombian territory. More than 25 million people of the national population of 45 million live in malaria zones, according to official data. In 2004 there were 25 malaria deaths reported, according to the Ministry of Social Protection, and 123,177 cases, more than 47 percent in the western-Pacific region, where Choco is located. Colombia signed on to the global campaign to "Roll Back Malaria" by half by 2010, but the country doesn't seem to be on the road to achieve that goal.

Source - IPS News

16. Peru: Malaria Moves In Behind the Loggers

OCT. 31, 2007 - Malaria has returned to the many villages only accessible by boat in the Peruvian Amazon, inflicting on the inhabitants days of fever, permanent anemia and - in the worst cases - death. Article continues

In Peru, malaria was almost eradicated 40 years ago, but this year 64,000 cases have been registered in the country, half of those in the Amazon region. It is thought there are many more unregistered cases deep within the massive and humid rainforest, where health authorities find it almost impossible to gain access. Two scientific reports last year linked malaria with deforestation. Peruvian researchers found that frontier areas cleared of trees for logging, settlements, roads, farming or mining were far more likely to harbor malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Deforestation is allowing the mosquito to move to new areas, spreading malaria to places where people are not aware of the disease, where villagers lack the means to get hold of mosquito nets and preventive medicines, and where health authorities have no presence.

Source - The Guardian

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17. New Web Portal Connects Tropical Disease Research

OCT. 31, 2007 - A web portal to help people identify and use vital information related to infectious diseases was launched at Forum 11, the annual meeting of the Global Forum for Health Research. TropIKA.net, run by the Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), will provide free information chosen by experts for practical use in infectious disease studies. Ridley said that increased funding for tropical diseases, along with open-access efforts from publishers and research institutes, has led to large amounts of available information, but this is often dispersed across various sources and offers inconsistent conclusions. At TropIKA.net, leading experts in the field are invited to analyze the scientific literature to provide clear information of its worth to researchers in developing countries for their work in tropical diseases.

Source - SciDev

Forests

18. Tropical Timber Council Commits US\$4 Million for Tropical Forest Law Enforcement

NOV. 15, 2007 - The forty-third session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC 43) took place from 5-10 November 2007, in Yokohama, Japan. The Council approved 15 projects and three pre-projects, and pledged US\$ 5.6 million in project financing. The Council also approved the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) Biennial Work Program for 2008-2009, with a total budget of US\$ 9.2 million. Part of the funding announced at this session included US\$ 4 million targeted at Tropical Forest Law Enforcement and Trade, provided by a major contribution by the Netherlands coupled with Japan, the US, Australia, Norway and the Japan Lumber Importers Association. The Council also reviewed the status of ITTA, 2006, which has only been ratified by the US, Malaysia Switzerland and Poland, but which must be ratified by ten consumer and twelve producer countries before it enters into force.

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Source - ITTO

Wildlife

19. Brazil: Scientist Claims to Find New Pig Species

NOV. 06, 2007 - A Dutch scientist thinks he has discovered a new species of wild pig nearly twice the size of other pigs in Brazil's Amazon region. At four feet long and 90 pounds, the pig is the

latest in a string of new species that Marc van Roosmalen reported to have found since 1996. His findings were published in the Oct. 29 edition of the German scientific journal Bonner Zoologische Beiträge. Van Roosmalen, said his discovery of the peccary _ a kind of wild pig he dubbed Pecari maximus _ points out the need to protect the region as a habitat for wild species. Van Roosmalen's success in discovering new species in the Amazon has earned him international acclaim.

Source - Washington Post

Science & Technology

¶10. Chile: Pressure from Researchers May Lead to Increase in Budget

NOV. 02, 2007 - A protest led by Chilean scientists pressed the Government of Chile to request from Parliament that the Science and Technology budget for 2008 be increased by 25 percent, compared to the budget proposed in September. More than one-thousand researchers, university directors, and science students gathered in front of Chile's Science and Technology Commission (CONICYT) on October 26th to demand an increase in the science budget for the country. "We are worried, [the government] invites us to build an economy based on knowledge, but they do not value scientific work appropriately," says Jorge Babul, president of the Council of Scientific Societies, who led the protest. According to the press report, the Parliament should come to a decision over the next few days.

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Source - SciDev

Infrastructure Development

¶11. Plans for Highway Linking Chile, Brazil and Landlocked Bolivia

NOV. 15, 2007 - The presidents of Chile, Bolivia and Brazil want to step up plans to build a highway from the Pacific to the Atlantic oceans that would boost trade, Chilean Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley said in Santiago. The highway would run from the Santos port in Brazil, cut through Santa Cruz, Bolivia, and end at the northern Chilean ports of Arica and Iquique. The highway would give land-locked Bolivia key maritime access. Foxley said the presidents: Chile's Michelle Bachelet, Bolivia's Evo Morales and Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva, discussed the issue during a summit of Latin American leaders.

Source - MercoPress

¶12. Brazil-Bolivia: Challenge Blocks Amazon Dams

OCT. 20, 2007 - Brazil's government plans to build two hydroelectric dams -- the Jirau and San Antonio -- on an uneven stretch of the Madeira River, in the western Brazilian state of Rondonia, with energy production potentials of 3,300 and 3,150 megawatts, respectively. A recent report from the Bolivian Forum on the Environment and Development called for an accord between the two countries as "the only possible approach for making the project for exploitation of the Madeira River effective". In addition, "a more in-depth analysis" of the possibility of trans-border alterations in water flow was called for during the Forum. Bolivian demands could prolong the discussions about the project, whose Environmental Impact Assessment will be reviewed in four hearings in November. The Brazilian authorities have said, for now, that they are willing to listen to their neighbors. The fact that Brazil shares the Madeira River with Bolivia complicates the energy projects, but its bilateral exploitation would be beneficial, according to Luiz Pereira, director of the non-governmental Institute for the Strategic Development of the Electrical Sector. "Energy integration

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is a good solution for Brazil and South America, with the aim of overcoming dominant sources of energy, like Bolivian natural gas and the gigantic hydroelectric Itaipu dam, which Brazil shares with Paraguay."

Source - IPS News

¶13. South American Gas Pipeline Will Connect Caribbean with Pacific Ocean

OCT. 14, 2007 - The presidents of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador announced Oct. 12th that new Ballenas-Maraciabo international pipeline will be extended across Colombia to create the first transoceanic pipeline on the continent. President [Hugo] Chavez said that plans were ready to connect the pipeline with Central America and the Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. President Chavez also announced plans to connect the pipeline with Panama and from there head north into Central America, expanding the Union of South American Nation's (Unasur) plans to create a regional energy grid to supply the continents increasing energy needs. According to the article, there is currently a continental push for greater integration, which was launched by the 12 presidents of the South American nations in 2000. The success of the movement so far has been mixed, with the northern half of the continent moving forward on projects like the Ballenas-Maracaibo pipeline while the southern cone remains bogged down in conflicts like that between Argentina and Chile [over LNG].

Source - South Affairs Blog

¶14. Revolt in the Andes: A Vote of Sorts against Big Mines

SEPT. 20, 2007 - Many of the world's top mining companies have made big investments in Peru and are now ramping up output just when world prices for minerals are at record highs. The industry is booming, as is the economy. But in the Andean highlands that contain the mineral deposits, some Peruvians are turning against the mining companies. The latest battle is at Rio Blanco, a remote spot close to the border with Ecuador where the Andes meet the Amazon, forming a misty cloud forest. On September 16th a loose coalition of environmentalists, Catholic priests, and foreign NGOs held an unofficial referendum in the three affected districts. Of the 17,971

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votes cast (a 60% community turnout, according to organizers), all but 984 voted against the mine. Opponents say the mine would pollute rivers that are vital for farmers in fertile valleys downstream and accuse the company of ignoring local opinion. More broadly, they argue that mining has failed to develop the Peruvian highlands. In response to the protests, mining companies are spending more on community development. According to the press article, it is time for Peru to create an environmental agency focused on environmental and social conflicts caused by large mining projects, rather than rely on a minute representation of environmental concerns within the Mining Ministry.

Source -The Economist

Pollution

¶15. Life in Peru's most polluted town

NOV. 15, 2007 - The Blacksmith Institute, a US-based environmental think tank, has ranked La Oroya as one of the top 10 most polluted places in the world for the last two years. La Oroya, home to more than 30,000 people, is a company town and many residents say nothing about the pollution for fear of losing their jobs. Three years ago the Peruvian health ministry (MINSA) found that 99.9% of children in La Oroya under the age of seven had blood lead levels far above safe norms. And a recent study of newborn babies by neurologist Dr Hugo Villa showed a quarter of those tested had dangerously high lead levels in their blood. The smelter was already 75 years old when

the Peruvian state sold it in 1997 to the US-based Doe Run Corporation (privately-held) on the condition that emissions would be cut. Doe Run says that at the time of sale, Peru had only just begun conforming to international environmental laws, and the plant was completely unregulated. The Peruvian Labor Association and Inter-American Association for Environmental Defense say their studies indicate toxic emissions have actually increased in the last decade, in some cases substantially.

Source - BBC

16. Chile: Authorities Outraged Over New Leak at Los Pelambres Mine

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NOV. 01, 2007 - Chilean authorities expressed outrage when informed of a toxic leak at a tailings dam in Region IV's Los Pelambres Mine. That leak, which lasted five hours before mine officials notified authorities, was disclosed to the press four days later. Los Pelambres Mine is 60 percent owned by Chile's powerful Luksic family and administered by Antofagasta Minerals, the mining arm of the family's economic empire. This is the second time since August that the plant has been responsible for a toxic spill. Radio Universidad de Chile reported that toxic residue flowed from the facility at a rate of 128 liters per second, resulting in a spill of more than 300,000 liters in the surrounding area. Officials believe that the waste traveled some two kilometers before entering the nearby Cuncumen River and its tributaries. A faulty pump, they say, was the source of the accident.

Source - Santiago Times

Energy

17. Brazil: Greenpeace Pledges Legal Action to Block Construction of Nuclear Plant

NOV. 06, 2007 - Greenpeace announced it is seeking court injunctions to block the construction of a third nuclear power plant in Brazil. The environmental group said it is seeking a restraining order from a federal court in Angra dos Reis, a coastal resort south of Rio de Janeiro and the site of Brazil's only two nuclear power plants. Nuclear plants Angra 1 and Angra 2 have an installed capacity of about 2,000 megawatts. Angra 3 would raise capacity to 3,300 megawatts at a cost of about US\$3.6 billion, according to the Mines and Energy Ministry. The government said this year it could build an additional four to eight nuclear power plants after Angra 3. Greenpeace is claiming in its suits that the construction of Angra 3 is "illegal and unconstitutional". It argues the plant lacks the express authorization of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and the approval of Congress.

Source - The Associated Press

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18. Colombia, Uruguay: Study Names Top Would-Be Biodiesel Producers

OCT. 25, 2007 - Colombia, Ghana, Malaysia, Thailand and Uruguay are the top five developing countries likely to attract biodiesel investment because of their strong agricultural industries, relative stability and low debt, says a US study. The analysis, 'A Global Comparison of National Biodiesel Production Potentials', was published October 24 in Environmental Science and Technology. The analysis ranks 226 countries according to their potential to make large volumes of biodiesel at low cost. The main objective was to identify developing countries already exporting large amounts of vegetable oil for profit - from palm or soybean crops for example - but who may not have considered the option of refining it into biodiesel. According to the study, these countries could improve their trade balance - the difference between a county's imports and

exports - by exporting biodiesel or using the fuel to satisfy their own energy needs.

Source - SciDev

[19. Q&A With Corporate Social Responsibility Expert on Chile's Proposed Aysen Dams](#)

OCT. 25, 2007 - Alternatives must be sought to building the five big hydroelectric dams planned by the HidroAysen company in Chile's Patagonia region, says Fernando Avila, executive director of the Association of Companies and Professionals for the Environment, AEPA, in an interview with Tierramerica. The attorney is convinced that companies can make economic profits while maintaining operating practices that are compatible with environmental protection. Today what is needed is a "center for environmental technologies -- public-private -- which has the technical authority to resolve conflicts," he says. For the complete Q&A please refer to the link below.

Source - Tierramerica

[20. Germany to Support Chilean Renewable Energy Efforts](#)

OCT. 22, 2007 - The German government has pledged up to US\$126 million to fund Chilean research into renewable energy and energy

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efficiency. A spokesperson for Chile's National Commission of Energy told SciDev.Net that the German government will donate US\$11.5 million and lend up to US\$114.5 million for this renewable energy effort. International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) - an initiative led by Germany - aims to promote the use of renewable energy sources such as solar energy, wind power, regenerative biomass, wave and tidal power worldwide. It will also support national energy planning, research centers and technology transfer throughout the world, especially from industrialized nations to developing countries. A bill on renewable energies - waiting to be approved by the Chilean parliament - aims to increase renewable energy production from its current level of 2.4 per cent to 8 per cent of total energy production in Chile by 2020.

Source - SciDev

Climate Change

[21. The Carbon Calculus](#)

NOV. 08, 2007 - A change is in the works that could go a long way toward making alternative energy less alternative, and more attractive to consumers and businesses. [This] change would come from Washington, if Congress does what it has talked about and puts a price tag on greenhouse-gas emissions. Suddenly the carbon content of fuel, or how much carbon dioxide is produced per unit of energy, would be as important as what the fuel costs. In fact, it might largely define what the fuel costs. That could shake up the economics of energy, handicapping some fuels and favoring others. Those that produce hefty emissions, like coal and oil, would likely look much worse. And some - sunlight, wind, uranium, even corn stalks and trash as well as natural gas - would probably look much better. "Carbon-negative" fuels that take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere as they are made, might even become feasible. On November 08, a Senate subcommittee approved a bill to establish a cap-and-trade system for carbon dioxide, and the Democratic leadership is eager to have the Senate pass it by year's end. Prospects in the House are less certain.

Source - The New York Times (please contact Larissa Stoner for

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complete article)

¶22. Brazil Considers Targets For Amazon Deforestation Reduction

OCT. 26, 2007 - Environment Minister Marina Silva stated that the Government of Brazil is beginning to examine the adoption of targets for reducing the deforestation of the Amazon, but that mandatory goals would only be acceptable if the country received foreign assistance to meet them. "We want to change the development model, but for that we need help, because reducing deforestation helps the entire planet," the minister reportedly said.

Source - Public Affairs US Embassy Brasilia

General

¶23. Brazil: Amazon Fire Wars Exacerbate Climate Change

NOV. 05, 2007 7 In Brazil, it's the end of the burning season, when people use fire to clear land for farms and ranches. But people also use fire as a weapon in range wars to push others off their land. Scientists say this fire cycle is not just destroying parts of the Amazon's southern forests, but altering the climate as well. It's common in the frontier here for squatters or land grabbers to set fire to land to force owners off, especially when land title is in dispute. If they can show the owners aren't developing that land in the first place, it's theirs. John Carter [from NGO Alianca da Terra, a USAID/Brazil grantee] is in the middle of one of these range wars. He's an American who has adopted Brazil as his home. His ranch covers 22,000 acres. He says more than 90 percent of it has just burned. And fires are still consuming what's left.

Source - NPR

¶24. Environment-Latin America: Same Old Problems, Says UNEP Report

OCT. 25, 2007 - Urban poverty and chaotic urban growth, loss of biodiversity, degradation of marine ecosystems, water and air pollution are just a few of the serious environmental problems that continue to plague Latin America and the Caribbean, the U.N.

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Environment Program says in a new global report. "There are many pending tasks in South America," Chilean chemical engineer Hector Jorquera told IPS. "We have problems of pollution in cities and of scarcity of water resources, threatened and endangered species, over-exploitation of marine resources, and increasing risk of diseases (especially skin cancer) caused by the thinning of the ozone layer, which is having an extremely strong effect at the southern tip of the continent." The UNEP report, drawn up by 390 experts and reviewed by another 1,000 around the world, is the fourth "Global Environment Outlook: Environment for Development" (GEO-4) survey. It describes the global changes seen since 1987 and assesses the current state of the atmosphere, land, water and biodiversity, while identifying priorities for action.

Source - IPS News

CHICOLA